


Chapter 7

Student–Authored Case Studies: The Case of an Educational Leadership Course in Kazakhstan

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the use of pre-prepared as well as student-authored case studies within the context of a blended learning educational leadership course at an English-speaking university within Kazakhstan. The course was developed to focus on graduate student applications of educational leadership principles and skills, specifically for teacher leadership. The class required students to collect survey data and other information from their home schools prior to face-to-face sessions. The students were introduced to case studies via prepared case studies that focused on educational leadership issues in western schools. After student groups worked through the assigned case studies, they were tasked with developing their own case studies based on the Kazakhstani context. These student-authored case studies were then piloted with their peers. This chapter describes in detail the classroom pedagogy utilized as well as assesses the value of the approach using classroom artifacts such as student reflections.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been an increased need for higher education institutes to develop graduates in multiple fields that have the professional skills that allow them to apply theory to their practice (e.g., Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; Elam, & Spotts, 2004). This development of professional skills seems to necessitate a shift in higher education towards more active methods of learning as opposed to the traditional lecture/discussion model (e.g., Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2009; Spanjaard, Hall, & Stegemann, 2018). Methods that actively engage learners include problem-based pedagogies such as action research, problem-based learning, portfolios and case study-based analysis (e.g., Dole, Bloom, & Kowalske, 2016; Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Prince, & Felder, 2006). These pedagogies have their roots in constructivist philosophy (Dewey, 1997). Constructivist pedagogies ask students to create questions, analyze data, and use theories to develop viable solutions. Thus, when using these pedagogies students are constructing their own knowledge (Sjoberg, 2010).

In order to address these needs in higher education the popularity of case studies has been increasing since its first use by Harvard Business School in the early 1900's (Rebeiz, 2011). Case study pedagogy is most often implemented using instructor or researcher prepared case studies. In fact, case study pedagogy using pre-prepared cases (CSP-P) has been widely adopted internationally in business (Trejo-Pech, & White, 2017), marketing (Brennan, 2009), accounting (Healy, & McCutcheon, 2010), teacher education (Koehler, Ertmer, & Newby, 2015), engineering (Yadav, Vinh, Shaver, Meckl, & Firebaugh, 2014), educational leadership (Cranston, 2008), sciences (King-Heiden, & Litster, 2018), sports management (Johnson, Judge, & Wanless, 2013) and criminal justice (Kunselman, & Johnson, 2004) to name a few. The reasons why CSP-P has been widely adopted in a range of fields is multifaceted since CSP-P has been shown to improve critical thinking skills (Tiwari, Lai, So, & Yuen, 2006), the ability to connect theory to real world situations (Gravett, de Beer, Odendaal-Kroon, & Merseeth, 2017; Johnson, et al., 2013), conceptual understanding (Yadav, et al., 2014) and problem solving skills (Koehler, et al., 2015). However, case study pedagogy using student-authored case studies (CSP-SA) has been researched to a lesser degree. In addition, the use of case studies has seldom been documented in educational leadership courses targeting not only educational administrators but also specifically teacher leadership. Finally, few articles have documented their use in Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan that are undergoing the Bologna process of internationalization.

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